

The Church 1978



Fr. Andrew Greeley

I have the melancholy suspicion that Catholic self-hatred will never go away.

We will never respect our own heritage, we will always vie with critics outside the Church in denouncing ourselves, we will be a permanent second-rate element of the American population because we ourselves have come to be per-

sueded by nativist myth that if it's Catholic it's no good.

Take for example a new Paulist Press booklet, **Parish Religious Education**. One of the authors, Dr. Stephen Schmidt, teaches in the graduate program of religious studies at Chicago's Mundelein college. His essay, "On Christian Nurture: Urban America U.S.A." is a vicious, irresponsible attack on urban ethnics and neighborhoods. Professor Schmidt is not Catholic, but for a Catholic publishing company and a Catholic college to provide him with platforms to vilify Catholic ethnics is an absolute disgrace.

Chicago, according to Dr. Schmidt, is "under God's word of judgment,

punished for its sins by its structures with death. It is a violent city, the city of the Haymarket Riot, the St. Valentine's Day massacre of Al Capone. Its reputation as a crime center is well-earned. It is a city where evil flourishes both in organized crimes and among the citizens themselves." One would think that there is no violence in other cities, that "organized crime" is not far more powerful in New York or Las Vegas, and that Chicago is the only city in the country where evil flourishes.

But crime and violence, according to Schmidt, is not the only or even the principal judgment of God on Chicago. "The melting pot never melted. Chicago remains a

divided city where one can cross from one neighborhood to another and find each one separate, proud, threatened. Pluralism is no sign of community; it is a sign of prejudice and parochial invertedness, a sign of judgment, God's permission of Babel in the midst of a mass community."

One does not know whether to be more shocked by his moral arrogance or the intellectual irresponsibility of such a charge from a professional theologian on the staff of an institution of higher learning. Dr. Schmidt simply doesn't know what he is talking about. Even at the height of the immigration era before the First World War, the famous Polish com-

munity around St. Stanislaus Kostka Church on the northwest side was in fact only half Polish. When Polish immigrants first came into the neighborhood, the Germans who were already there shared their churches with them until the Poles could get their own parishes organized. The Poles and the Germans lived side by side in peace and relative friendship for many years, as do now the Poles and Hispanics in the same neighborhood.

Mayor Daley's home neighborhood of Bridgeport, so dearly hated by the Studs Terkels and the Mike Roykos of the city, has within one square mile Polish, Lithuanian, Czech, Slovak, Croatian, Italian and "Irish"

parishes—with a substantial proportion of Hispanics in the parochial schools of all the parishes. One would be hard put to think of a more pluralistic neighborhood anywhere in the world.

That there is prejudice and bigotry in Chicago I would not deny. There is prejudice and bigotry in all large diversified urban centers. But Schmidt's judgment that ethnic diversity leads to ethnic bigotry is a prioristic and not supported by the empirical data. Ethnic Catholics are in fact less prejudiced against blacks than are non-ethnic white Americans, and ethnic neighborhood parishes are far more important institutions of pluralistic integration than they are of parochial separation.

WORD FOR SUNDAY



Fr. Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Jn. 20:1-9. (R1) Acts 10:34, 37-43. (R2) Ccl. 3:1-4.

Toward the end of the reign of the Caesars, a monk went to Rome. His name was Telemachus. When he saw the games in the Coliseum for the first time, he was appalled at the destruction of life taking place. When the gladiators stood before Caesar and said, "We who are about to die salute you," he sprang forward and cried out, "In the name of Christ, forbear!"

Everyone laughed. "A new clown act," they thought.

As the gladiators started to fight, Telemachus rushed down into the arena and got between them. Again everybody laughed. But soon the mood changed. The crowd became impatient with Telemachus, who wouldn't quit. They began to scream, "Run him through!" Then a sword flashed and Telemachus lay dead. The games went on that day, but somehow the fun was gone. Many people left the Coliseum.

Soon after that, the games ceased. One man's death made all the difference.

A prominent feature of Easter is the fragrant, white Easter lily. Its trumpetlike blossom blares that one man's death has brought new hope to the world, has made so radical difference in the world that everything in history that happened before His death is labeled B.C. and everything after as A.D. Man no longer need hate his fellowman and be alienated from God. Man can once more walk in peace with his neighbor and God. On Christmas, angels promised this peace; on Easter, He offered it—"Peace be with you."

But a gift offered must be accepted. So many are unable to celebrate Easter because they have not risen with Christ, accepted His offer in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Old hurts are cuddled within hearts, old hates are nursed there

is no peace within, and so little joy, because there is not peace without—between us and neighbor and God.

Yet at Mass each Sunday, we turn and say, "The peace of Christ be with you." A husband to wife and wife to husband, parents to children and children to parents, neighbor to neighbor. Yes, in church. But wait until we get home, or out in the parking lot.

We are so often not unlike the woman who provided a tombstone for her husband. On it she inscribed two sentences. The first read, "Rest in peace." The second read, "Until we meet again." Both statements are good when taken alone, but put together they don't somehow come out right. That can be the problem with our using the word "peace." We so often use it in a limited sense: peace in church, but wait until we meet again outside.

The great men of history were passing in front of God.

As Moses passed by, God said to him, "What did you give to your people?"

Moses answered, "I gave them the Law."

God replied, "And what did they make of it?"

"Sin," said Moses.

Then Charlemagne passed by and God said, "What did you give your people?"

He said, "I gave them an altar for the worship of the one true God."

"And what did they make of it?" God asked.

He replied, "A stake for the burning of heretics."

Finally, Jesus Christ passed in front of His Father, who asked, "What did you give your people?"

Jesus replied, "I gave them peace."

"And what," asked His Father, "did they make of it?"

"War," answered Jesus.

Easter proclaims that this need never be, if we be risen with Christ. Let Easter be Easter for us all. Let there be a true resurrection—a burying of old enmities, of hates and hurts, and a resurrection of love and new life, of caring and sharing, of giving and forgiving. For "Christ our Passover has been sacrificed"—to bring us peace!

four priests... four views

To Father Atwell:

Our March 2 "debate" was hardly explosive, and I was pleased that despite a bit of Hans Kueng hovering over your presentation of "What Do We Believe as Catholics?", it would have satisfied most faithful Catholics. I suppose the memory of some of your more outlandish pronouncements throughout the years leaves a lingering suspicion. Such is the price of expression.

When I left Avon I headed for Hornell to do a couple tapes on Wyalusing for our Magnify the Lord radio program the next day. It was another hour, so I shot a tape of Jesuit Father Micelli's radio talks into the cassette deck. The talks were on Communism in Italy. They clarified for me reports in the press of the murders, kidnappings and maimings of Italian judges, police businessmen and their families. While listening, I was struck by the similarities Father Micelli and I share in expressing ourselves. Sadly, I am not pleased. And by contrast I pondered over your own gift of presentation, and confess a bit of unholy envy.

First of all you are so impressively trim and neat. Father Harry Doerbecker used to say to Father Gaynor who succeeded you in Newark: "Father Atwell was very neat." This applies not only to your person and script, but to your mind. It is so tidy, and serves you well in presentation, whether in lecture hall, pulpit or on TV. Your exposition is done with a persuasive calm giving to your listeners a sense of reasonableness. You are amiable and receptive to

ON THE RIGHT SIDE



Fr. Paul J. Cuddy

an audience, gathering that ever important good will.

You do have an irritating way of putting up straw men to knock them down. For example: "In the old days people learned the catechism, but did their catechism knowledge influence their lives?" The inference is, of course, that it did not. This conclusion I think quite false. The catechism is a valuable guide. Studying the road map to Denver is not the same as travelling the road, but it does give direction. The catechism guides us in this life, and to the next.

The contrast between your mode of speaking and my own came clear in Father Micelli's talks. Father M's is so wrapped up in his subject that he gives the impression of intolerance and of being over-bearing. He is so sweeping in his statements that he could impel even well-wishers to pause. These weaknesses I recognize in myself. And add to those a bit of occasional hyperbole to give flare; a bit of humor to give life, and a bit of heavy handedness in rejection of what I believe is false or evil. These are sometimes misunderstood and cause some alienation. A newspaper man told me: "If a thing can be misunderstood, it

THE OPEN WINDOW



Fr. Louis Hohman

Dear Father Hohman, Recently I received a bulletin from Texas concerning a community called the St. Pius X Society. It had

will be." On the other hand I think my strong points are a patent conviction, a facility of illustration, a spontaneous sense of humor, and an obvious liking for the people addressed, even if they are in opposition.

Have you read Father Avery Dulles' beautiful article on the recently deceased Father Leonard Feeney? Writing of Father Feeney's early days around Harvard, he says: "Not only was the doctrine solid; the oratory was superb. Never have I known a speaker with such a sense of collective psychology. Father Feeney would not come to his main point until he had satisfied himself that every member of the audience was disposed to understand and accept his message. In the early part of his lecture, he would tell anecdotes, recite poems, and in various ways seek to gain the attention and good will of all his hearers. When at length he had the entire audience reacting as a unit, he would launch into the main body of his talk, leading them from insight to insight, from emotion to emotion, until all were carried away, as if by an invisible force permeating the atmosphere (America, Feb. 25.) Excepting Archbishop Sheen, I know hardly any Catholic speaker who has such gifts.

Well thank you for your generous invitation to share the platform with you. Thanks to your household for the hospitality, and that luscious pork dinner with lemon pie, hardly the Diet Workshop ideal, but a reward for having lost 30 pounds.

a lead article on Archbishop Lefebvre and other articles which obviously were in favor of his position. One of the things I read which impressed me was to this effect—that priests in former days were kind in the confessional but gave definite answers and not just what you wanted to hear. This sort of rang a bell with me. I get the impression our priest is bending over backwards to be kind in a way that seems to be saying that whatever I do is O.K. I know it can't be that way and I'm wondering if I end up less motivated to change my ways since he makes it sound not all that important. Maybe we need priests to tell us more "yes" and "no," and not so much "maybe." I'm afraid I didn't express this very well but I hope you got the drift.

(Signed) C.C.

Dear C.C.,

The experience you have had is hard to pinpoint, but I would like to start my answer with some background information. The old approach to the Sacrament of Penance (and I'm sure it's still the approach of those in the St. Pius X Society) is that the priest sits in the confessional in the role of a judge, in a certain real sense deciding the extent of a person's guilt and dealing with the person accordingly. In the new Rite of Reconciliation we are admonished by the Roman Documents to assume rather the role of a fellow sinner who is there to help celebrate the return of this particular sinner to God's favor and love, and to celebrate also the ways in which this person can become a better individual.

If a priest has come to the point of writing off morality to the extent of saying that everyone is O.K., then that priest has not been doing his homework and keeping up with what needs to be known. Moral standards are alive and well and it would be ridiculous to give an O.K. to that which is sinful. On the other hand, in the discussion of subjective guilt (that is, the guilt of the person as distinguished from the act) there is a lot of room for doubt as to the extent of the guilt, and at times this may seem like catering to the individual at the expense of moral right and wrong.

As I said at the beginning this is an area which is extremely difficult to talk about, because you are dealing with persons under particular circumstances and each case would pretty much have to be decided on its own merits.